

MEMOIRS
OF
PRETENDED PROPHETS,
WHO HAVE APPEARED IN
DIFFERENT AGES OF THE WORLD,
AND ESPECIALLY IN
MODERN TIMES;

POINTING OUT, FROM AUTHENTIC SOURCES,
THEIR BLUNDERS,
And the Pernicious Consequences of their Pretensions :

WITH
AN EXAMINATION OF SOME OF THE MOST REMARKABLE
AND BEST ATTESTED MODERN PREDICTIONS, SHEW-
ING THAT NO INFERENCE CAN BE DEDUCED
FROM THEM IN FAVOR OF THE
RECENT EXISTENCE OF A
PROPHETIC SPIRIT.

BY A CLERGYMAN.

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether
they are of God : because many false Prophets are gone out
into the world.

ST. JOHN, 1 EPH. IV. 1.

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James Frankel

INTRODUCTION.

WE have lately heard much respecting Prophets and prophecies. The reveries of those enthusiastic men, who have formerly disgraced themselves by their pretensions to a prophetic spirit, have been industriously sought for. Even the writings of sober commentators upon the scripture prophecies, have been ransacked, and their modest conjectures have been styled predictions. Many motley collections of extracts, said to contain remarkable predictions, have issued from the press, and have found numerous readers. Some have even ventured to foretel future events themselves, and, as has happened in most other cases of the same kind, they have not been destitute of disciples.

The author of the following pages has not been an inattentive observer of all this.

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He has beheld it, however, without much surprise. He has some little knowledge of history, and he has learned from this, that pretended prophets are no uncommon phenomena, and that whenever they have appeared, they have never failed to impose upon the credulity of numbers. He knew also, that men are prone to extremes. While some are stupidly indifferent to every thing interesting, others are too apt to receive the most extravagant opinions as truths. The writers of our most popular Almanacks are fully acquainted with this weakness, and therefore, take much pains to gratify the multitude, who are fond of the marvellous, with predictions relating to the weather, and with obscure prognostications of other matters ; and if in a few instances, their conjectures are found to be right, the unsuccessful cases are forgotten, and the authors are considered as having the gift of foresight.

But though it is confessed that no new thing hath happened in the world, by the rage which has been manifested for prophesying, and by the injudicious eagerness with which pretensions of this kind have been acknowledged,

ledged, yet no true friend of mankind can behold such an unworthy use of the human faculties without regret. The understanding, which can cordially assent to such bold and unwarrantable claims, must be fitted for the reception of the wildest notions in religion and morality. These pages will afford a few instances of the truth of this remark. The Anabaptists on the Continent, and the Fifth-monarchy-men in England, went from one degree of fanaticism to another, till at length, as we shall see, they thought they did God service, and were acting as the executors of his will, when they had recourse to rebellion and murder.

I apprehend that this subjecting a person to adopt the most extravagant opinions, is one of the natural consequences of his believing in some pretended prophet; and this is an evil which is hurtful to society. But it is not the only ill effect which is to be expected. I have feared for the interests of religion on another account. I have imagined that the present prophecy-mania, might be detrimental in another point of view. Whether I have rea-

son on my side, I shall leave the public to judge, after stating the grounds of my apprehension.

It is well known in what a confident, I had almost said blasphemous manner, many lay claim to inspiration. They speak as if they were the organs of the Supreme Being. They seem to be as certain of what they advance, as if they had *seen it actually* fulfilled. Some of them even speak in the person of the great God, and others profess that they received, what they deliver, by express revelation; and yet these exorbitant demands upon the credulity of mankind, are easily acquiesced in by their deluded followers, and the confidence of the prophet passes to his adherents. These enthusiastic rhapsodies are considered as on a level with the sacred oracles, and have as much, perhaps more, respect paid to them. But when it is found that the great things which have been foretold do not come to pass, will not many find themselves disappointed? And as men are prone to pass from one extreme to another, will they not then go from the extreme of believing every thing, to the contrary one of believing almost nothing?

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The transition is easy from unbounded credulity to unbounded infidelity. I shall in the course of this publication, give an instance of the ill effect of this self-deception in the case of George Bell, which will explain my ideas upon this subject. That infatuated man, after having made high pretensions to piety, at length imagined that he possessed the spirit of prophecy, and upon finding himself deceived in this respect gave up religion altogether. I wish his case may serve as a warning to others, as it shews how nearly enthusiasm and irreligion are connected.

Though religion abhors all such extravagance, yet it is generally charged with them. Many will not distinguish between the conduct of professing Christians and Christianity itself, but impute every thing that is amiss in the former, to something that is wrong in the latter. The writer of these pages, in common with many others, has therefore lamented the prevalence of some recent absurdities, and it is from a conviction of the bad effects which may attend them, that he now offers his testimony against them. He is a sincere friend to the

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blest gospel of Jesus Christ, and would contribute all in his power to promote true and genuine piety. It is only because he is persuaded that such extravagant pretensions are unfriendly to the sober doctrines and precepts of revelation, that he has taken up his pen on the present occasion.

The author has formed a hope, that a statement of the false predictions of former prophets, may serve as a check upon the influence of others. "It has always been observed, "that times of calamity are peculiarly fertile "in visions and prognostications, predictions "and prophecies*," and it has been as constantly observed, that they have failed of their fulfilment. Among all the numerous tribes of prophets, not one has been found, excepting the biblical, who has not deceived the expectations of his adherents. The inference I leave with my readers. That which I have drawn is, that we cannot acknowledge any one to be a prophet, till he has proved himself to be such by undoubted evidence. We must withhold our

* Halhed's Testimony in favour of Brothers, p. 4.

assent, till we find that he has predicted a considerable number of events, which were far beyond the reach of human probability and foresight, and that they have all come to pass without a single miscarriage. This, however, has never yet happened, but in the case of the scripture prophets, and in the present complete state of the Christian revelation, it is not to be expected.

I know but of one exception to the rule I have mentioned. It is when the prophet has the power of performing miracles. This may silence all doubt; and if a prophet were now to be raised up, I should expect that he would be furnished with such a power. Some of the pretenders to a prophetic spirit, have seen the necessity of being possessed of this criterion, and have boldly asserted that they had it. This, as we shall see, was the folly and disgrace of Jurieu. The French prophets also, who made such a noise in England in the reign of Queen Anne, “ventured to alledge miraculous evidence, and immediately ruined their cause by their temerity*.”

* Dr. Paley's Evidences of Christianity: Vol. I. p. 349. Second Edition.

ERRATA.

Page Line.

- 5 10 Insert the word *are*.
11 15 Dele. the word *last*.
14 23 read *seemed* instead of *seems*.
20 15 read *penmen* instead of *penman*.
23 14 read *prophecy* instead of *prophecy*.
25 8 read *passed* for *passing*.
37 12 dele *the* before *order*.
41 21 read *Joshuas, Sampsons, and Gideons*, without the
apostrophe.

M E M O I R S

OF

PRETENDED PROPHETS.

SECTION I.

The Blunders of pretended Prophets.

THESE open a wide field. There is in the human mind a desire to dive into futurity, which has, in every age, made many the dupes of designing or enthusiastic men. It were easy to enumerate a vast variety of ancient Pagan auguries and predictions that were never fulfilled. The heathens were accustomed to consult their oracles before they entered upon any thing arduous, and history records many instances, in which they were led to disaster and ruin by the answers they received.

But I mean to confine myself chiefly to later times; and here too there is ample scope. Among all the various pretenders, not one has made good

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his claim to prescience. If they are sometimes right, they are oftener wrong; and what can we think of such prophets?

With an ignorance or disingenuousness worthy of the cause they have undertaken, the compilers of the *Remarkable Predictions* make some of the persons, whose blunders are here exposed, contribute their quota to their publications. If they were in possession of the whole of their prognostications, they must have known that many of them had proved false. In selecting only such as appear to be near the mark, or which relate to future times, they may deceive the unwary, but in so doing they are no other than deceivers themselves.

Should these pages fall into the hands of any who have hastily given credit to their prophetic countrymen, I am not without an hope that they will make them re-consider the grounds of their assent. I have a much higher expectation that they may serve as an antidote with respect to others. When the unprejudiced reader is informed, that every age has had its bold pretenders to prescience, and that they have invariably been found to be false prophets, he will be cautious in believing other pretensions of the same kind, and nothing more is necessary to preserve him from falling into a criminal and pernicious credulity.

Prophets

Prophets in the Reign of James the First.

In this reign prognostications so much abounded, that the Earl of Northampton thought it proper to write a folio against them. The title of his work is, *A Defensive against the Poison of Supposed Prophecies*. He asserts that these had been the "causes of great disorder in the Commonwealth, especially among the simple and unlearned people."

In Scotland, the same rage for prophesying was equally prevalent. "Some of the Puritans," says Bishop Burnet, "boldly gave out very many predictions; particularly two of them, Davidson and Bruce. Some of the things they foretold came to pass; but my father, who knew them both, told me of many of their predictions that he himself heard them throw out, which had no effect; but all these were forgot, and if some more probable guessings, which they delivered as prophecies, were accomplished, these were much magnified."*

What our historian says of Davidson and Bruce is so applicable to others, that if we make only a necessary change of names, we may consider him as speaking of the whole fraternity of modern prophets: for if their predictions are not of a *probable*, they are at least of a *tentative* nature.

* History of his Own Time, Book I. Vol. 1, p. 20, of the duodecimo edition, printed by Hamilton of Edinburgh.

What I mean by *probable* predictions I will explain by an instance:—When Mr. Flechère, the late pious Vicar of Madeley, was in France in the year 1778, he wrote to his friends in England the following account of the infidelity, impiety, and profligacy of the French people: “ Gaming and
 “ dress, sinful pleasure, and love of money, unbelief
 “ and false philosophy, lightness of spirit, fear of
 “ man, and love of the world, are the principal
 “ sins by which Satan binds his captives in these
 “ parts. Materialism is not rare; deism and Socinianism are very common; and a set of free-thinkers, great admirers of Voltaire and Rousseau, Bayle and Mirabeau, seem bent upon destroying
 “ christianity and government. With one hand
 “ they shake the throne, and with the other they
 “ throw down the altars. If we believe them, the
 “ world is the dupe of kings and priests. Religion
 “ is fanaticism and superstition. Christian morality
 “ is absurd, unnatural, and impracticable; and
 “ Christianity the most bloody religion that ever
 “ was.” It was easy to foresee, from these premises, that some catastrophe was at no great distance, and we have little reason therefore to be surprised at the *happinefs* of the conjecture which immediately follows: “ *Papery will certainly fall in France in this or the next century*; and I make no doubt God will use those vain men to bring about a reformation here, as he used Henry the Eighth

to do that work in England; so the madness of his enemies shall, at last, turn to his praise, and to the furtherance of his kingdom."*

The latter part of this passage is superior in every respect to the generality of prognostications. But will any one pretend that it is a proof that Mr. Flechère had a supernatural knowledge of futurity? He himself made no such claim. The reflection arose naturally in his mind from what he saw. And not most of the predictions, of which so much has been said, of the same nature? They may be called prophecies after they have been verified by the event, but when they were spoken, they were no other than conjectures.

I call predictions *tentative*, when, out of a great number, some only succeed. The ancient oracles and auguries, as well as the prognostications of later prophets, have all been of this nature. If the events they have foretold were beyond the bounds of human probability, they have generally erred. Yet such is the strange insatiation that has prevailed, that "a single coincidence of the event with the prediction has been talked of and magnified, while failures have been forgotten, or suppressed, or accounted for."†

* Flechère's *Posthumous Pieces*, published by the Rev. Melvill Horne, page 257, 258.

† Paley's *Evidences of Christianity*, Vol. 1. p. 358.

Millenarians, or Fifth-Monarchy-men.

During the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell, religious toleration was carried to the greatest excess. The most extravagant sects were indulged in their absurdities, and it was the Episcopalians almost alone, who felt the arm of power; and they suffered in no common degree.

Amongst the most pernicious opinions which were propagated at this period, were those of the Fifth-Monarchy-men, of whom I shall have occasion to speak afterwards. What I mean at present to state respecting them is, that they were in constant expectation of the commencement of the Millennium. They were so confident that Christ would speedily appear, and establish a glorious kingdom that should continue for a thousand years, that it seemed as if a madness possessed them.*

It is no wonder that they were disappointed. When persons are very positive in their opinions of obscure prophecies, we may immediately suspect that they have fallen into errors. They must be of an enthusiastic disposition, and then it is not surprising that they should imagine they find in scripture every thing which they wish to find there.

* See Burnet's History of his Own Time, Book I. Vol. 1. p. 94. and Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History, Vol. II. Cent. 17. Sect. 2. Part 2. of the Quarto Edition.

To shew that the time when the Millenium will commence is not clearly revealed, we need only observe the different calculations of this event.

The celebrated Whiston fixed upon the year of our Lord 1720, a period which has long elapsed.

Mr. Halhed asserts that the Millenium will commence on the 19th of November, 1795; I examine not the steps by which he arrives at this conclusion; a little time will shew whether he is right or wrong. For the present I suspend my assent. I am glad that he has fixed upon so early a date, as the world will soon be enabled to judge what degree of credit is to be given to the pretensions of our prophets.

Till Mr. Halhed's opinion shall have been actually confirmed by the event, the public will doubtless believe with me, that Mr. Fleming is full as likely to be right in this matter as Mr. Halhed, and his supposition is, that the Millenium will take place about the year 2000.

Mr. G. Burton, in his calculations published in 1772, has endeavoured to prove that the Millenium will begin at a still later period. He has pointed out the year 2436.

As some persons may hastily imagine that the differences among learned men, respecting the nature of many of the scripture prophecies, and the times of their completion are derogatory to the sacred writings, I would remind them, that there are good reasons why these predictions should be kept

obscure, till they have received their fulfilment. And as I cannot express my ideas upon this subject better than I find them expressed by Bishop Newton, I shall beg leave to quote a part of that prelate's writings. "Obscurities," says that writer, "there are indeed in the prophetic writings, for which many good reasons may be assigned, and this particularly, because prophecies are the only species of writing, which is designed more for the instruction of future ages than of the times wherein they are written. If the prophecies had been delivered in plainer terms, some persons might be for hastening their accomplishment, as others might attempt to defeat it; men's actions would not appear so free, nor God's providence so conspicuous in their completion. But though some parts are obscure enough to exercise the church, yet others are sufficiently clear to illuminate it; and the obscure parts, the more they are fulfilled, the better they are understood. In this respect, as the world groweth older it groweth wiser. Time, that detracts something from the evidence of other writers, is still adding something to the credit and authority of the prophets. Future ages will comprehend more than the present, as the present understands more than the past: and the perfect accomplishment will produce a perfect knowledge of the prophecies."*

* Bishop Newton's Dissertations on the Prophecies, Vol. II. p. 396, Edition printed at Perth, 1790.

Admitting that many of the scripture prophecies are obscure, till illustrated by the event, a fact which experience has fully proved, we ought to be much upon our guard against receiving authoritative and dogmatical comments upon them. Many have been the errors which have flowed from this source, and it will appear, in the course of these pages, that some of them have had the most pernicious effects.

I am far from supposing it criminal to offer to the world modest conjectures respecting the biblical prophecies. As the book of revelation is put into our hands, we are at liberty to enquire into the whole of its contents. But it certainly argues a strange perverseness, when men bend almost the whole of their attention to such subjects, as are likely to elude the penetration of the acutest intellect. And when they propagate the opinions they have formed, from researches of this difficult nature, with as much zeal and confidence as if they had received them by express revelation, it is still worse. Yet such was the conduct of the Fifth-Monarchymen, and it is fanaticism like this which disgraces its possessors.

J U R I E U.

PETER JURIEU was an eminent French Protestant. About the year 1681, considering himself in danger in his own country, he went into Holland,

land, and became *Professor of Divinity* at Rotterdam. Being now in a place of liberty, and having nothing to fear, he gave a full scope to his imagination, naturally too warm and vivid, and indulged it to excess. In this temper he applied himself to study the book of the Apocalypse, and thought he had certainly discovered the true meaning of it by a kind of inspiration or divine revelation; which shewed him that France was the place of the great city, where the witnesses, mentioned in the eleventh chapter, lay dead, but not buried; and that they were to rise to life again in three years and a half, viz. in the year 1689. He was unalterably fixed and confirmed in this persuasion, by the revolution which happened in England, in 1688, insomuch that he addressed a letter upon the subject to king William the Third, whom he looked on as the instrument which God intended to make use of to carry his designs into execution.—Those who were acquainted with him saw very plainly, that his prophecies were the effect of enthusiasm, and what he called conviction. Under this prepossession, although he was not naturally credulous, he gave into the belief of a great number of prodigies, and falsely pretended miracles, which he vouched for so many presages, or forerunners of the accomplishment of the prophecies.*

* Article Jurieu in General Biographical Dictionary, Vol. VII. Octavo.

In the prophecy that has been mentioned, we have no reason to complain of a want of clearness, particularity, or publicity; it relates also to an event sufficiently above the reach of human foresight; so that if the fact had corresponded with the prediction, *the claim of Jurieu to an extraordinary illumination might have been allowed.* But what he had foretold failed of its accomplishment. He was found to be a false prophet, and his name should serve, as a beacon to warn future commentators, not to be too confident in their opinions of those Scripture prophecies which are yet to be fulfilled.

Notwithstanding this gross failure, which was public & known throughout all Europe, he has been classed among the last prophets; and such of his predictions, as suited the purposes of their publishers, have been extracted from his writings, and given anew to the world. Yet these predictions are of little account, and I only mention them to shew what impositions are practised upon the unlearned and unwary. For what should we have thought of Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Daniel, if in any instance they had been thus mistaken? Should we not have denied their claim to prescience, and if, in some respects, their predictions had been accomplished, should we not have attributed this to any thing rather than to a prophetic spirit?

French

French Prophets in the Reign of Queen Anne.

In the year 1706, three French Protestants, pretending to be prophets, arrived in England. They were the greatest fanatics, and declared that every thing they uttered was dictated by the Holy Ghost. Though their predictions were full of the most senseless repetitions, and of the grossest absurdities, yet they were joined by several of their French Refugee brethren, as well as by many of our British people, who, in their turn, pretended also to be agitated in the same supernatural manner. Two of their disciples, Sir John Buckley, and John Lacy, esquire, were gentlemen of good estates, and contributed not a little by their influence, to give them credit with the people. The evil was spreading, and might have had much worse effects, if it had not been checked by the punishment of some of the ringleaders. The French church in the Savoy took the lead in this business, being sensible that these extravagances, in some of their members, might cast an odium upon the whole community. After stating their disgraceful behaviour, and declaring that many of their predictions had proved false already, they proceeded to pass a censure against them. The cause was next taken up by the civil power, when three of them were convicted of pretending to be prophets; in consequence of which

which they were exposed upon a scaffold, with a label upon their breasts, purporting that they suffered this disgrace, on account of their having laid claim to a prophetic spirit.

This college of prophets was very little heard of afterwards. Their hopes of making proselytes seem to have subsided with their punishment. They were not able to form themselves into a prophetic sect, as they had doubtless intended. Many of them removed into Scotland, and sunk into the obscurity and contempt they deserved.

These prophets published prophetic warnings, and Lacy seems to have been principally concerned in the publication. It has been said, that there never was such trash published before. If I may judge from the extract I have seen, I am not disposed to call in question the propriety of this assertion. That, at least, is worthy the pen of a Brothers.

Their claim to prescience was no better supported than those of many others have been. I shall content myself with one instance of this. They "gave out that one of their teachers would "come to life again, but their enthusiasm never "made them believe that they actually saw him "alive*." The day, upon which Mr. Emmis was

* Paley's Evidences of Christianity, Vol. I. p. 354.

to have arisen, passed away, without realizing the predicted event.

The history of these prophets bears so near a resemblance to what is passing in our time, that we can scarcely help making some comparison between them.

Many persons have been much surprised at Mr. Halhed's becoming a convert to such a prophet as Brothers. That a member of the British parliament, and an eminent literary character, should publish his testimony in favour of such a cause, appears to them unaccountable. But there is nothing in this which has not happened before. The French prophets, we have seen, had two gentlemen of large fortune amongst the number of their adherents. One also of their most zealous disciples, I mean Nicholas Fatio Duiller, was a person of very great abilities, both natural and acquired. "Bishop Burnet, in the first letter of his Travels, speaks of him as an incomparable mathematician and philosopher, who, though only twenty-two years old, was already become one of the greatest men of his age, and seems born to carry learning beyond what it had hitherto attained." He was a native of Switzerland. Upon his coming to England, he entered into an intimate acquaintance with Sir Isaac Newton and other eminent persons. It is surely humiliating to see a person like this, voluntarily giving up such society, and becoming

coming the secretary of a few fanatics. The office which Mr. Halhed fills, as the apologist of Brothers, is full as respectable as that which Fatio enjoyed*.

Other false Predictions.

Upon the preceding instances I have made some observations. But that I may not be thought tedious, I will dispatch those which follow as briefly as I can, and will leave it with my readers to draw the proper inferences from them.

It were easy to enlarge this short catalogue of false predictions, but I imagine that it is not necessary.

HERODOTUS informs us, that Cræsus, having enquired of the oracle at Delphi, whether he should make war against Persia, received for answer, that in so doing he should overthrow a mighty empire. Deluded by the words of the oracle, he led his forces against Cyrus, in full expectation of becoming the conqueror of Persia. When he found himself totally vanquished, the prisoner of Cyrus, and bound in fetters, and had obtained permission of his conqueror, to send to Delphi to complain of being thus deceived, the oracle had the audacity to assert, that when he told him he would overthrow a mighty empire, he meant not the empire of

* For the whole of this article consult the Histories of the Reign of Queen Anne.

Cyrus,

Cyrus, but the empire of Crœsus ; a paltry and ridiculous subterfuge*.

The city of Epidamnus, enquiring of the same oracle, whether they should surrender their city to the Corinthians as their founders, and should seek security from their protection, were answered, that they should surrender, and take them for their leaders. Having acted agreeably to this counsel, their city was besieged and taken by the enemy, and all the assistance afforded them by the Corinthians was of no avail†.

The emperor Tiberius, having departed from Rome, a prophecy was given out that he should not return again. Many excellent citizens giving credit to this prediction, and anxious to deliver their country from servitude, pursued measures, which were only the cause of their own death‡.

The whole of the prophets, astrologers, and conjurers of Egypt, assured Licinius, in the strongest terms, that if he would declare war against Constantine, he should certainly be victorious. Induced by these assurances, he waged war ; the consequence of which was a total defeat ; and if Constantine had not given it in charge to his army to spare his person, he had fallen a victim to his folly.§

* Herod. Lib. I.

† Thucyd. Lib. I.

‡ Tacit. Annal. Lib. 4.

§ Eusebius de Vita Constan. Lib. 1. Cap. 2.

DON JANNES DE BARBUDA, a nobleman of Castile in Spain, was persuaded, by a simple hermit, that he should recover the kingdom of Granada from the Moors, without the loss of a single life. Relying upon the truth of what he had heard, he set out upon his enterprize with the small force of a thousand foot, and three hundred horse. The king of Castile, upon discovering his intentions, endeavoured to dissuade him, by reminding him of the little probability there was of his succeeding with such a handful of men: he told him that it was presumptuous to expect a miracle to be wrought in his favour, that he would endanger the lives of many brave men, and might be the instrument of mischief and ruin to his country. He rejected, however, this salutary counsel, rushed forward with a stupid obstinacy, and had scarcely entered into the kingdom of Granada before he and his little army were cut off.*

The young DUKE OF VISCO in Portugal, having once been pardoned, was encouraged to rebel a second time by some astrologers, who assured him that he should obtain the crown. He was not only disappointed in his expectation, but suffered death as a *punishment* for his rebellion.

*If any of my readers should wish to know upon what authorities this and the following instances are founded, I would refer them to the earl of Northampton's *Defensative against the Poyson of supposed Prophecies*, where they will find the information they desire.

The reporter of the civil wars in France, who professes himself to be a zealous protestant, ascribes the perseverance of his companions in the siege of Poitiers, from whence they returned with dishonour, to the credit which was given to the prophecies of Nostrodamus, who had written, that, in such a month, the besieged should be obliged to yield, and the negligence of the mighty should be turned to their confusion.

The castle of Sion in Bohemia, the residence of some foolish priests, who prophesied that the truth should originate from thence, was soon razed to the ground, and the builder of it *suffered death* with his adherents.

There is mention made, both in the Spanish and French histories, of some Shepherds, who, influenced by a prophecy that they should conquer and subdue the Holy Land, collected together a number of persons of loose morals and broken fortunes. They had recourse to fraud and rapine to support themselves in their journey, and numbers of them suffered death on this account, in almost every country through which they passed: none of them ever reached the place of their destination, but the whole of them were either executed or dispersed.

Perhaps some persons may wonder that I have not produced a chapter of accidents from the prophet Brothers. And I readily agree with them, that his predictions have in so many instances
already

already proved false, that he might have been properly classed amongst the prophetic blunderers. I have presumed, however, that his failures would be generally known, and that these pages might, therefore, be more properly employed, in giving the examples of other times.

SECTION II.

An Examination of some of the most remarkable and best attested Predictions of Modern Times.

THE preceding Section will be allowed to have its weight in the question respecting the light in which our present prophets are to be considered. But as some persons may suppose that there are many single predictions so striking, that they are sufficient of themselves to prove that their authors must have possessed a prophetic spirit, I shall advert to this objection.

For the sake of brevity, I shall only take notice of a few instances, but these shall be such as have had the greatest stress laid upon them. Some of the remarks made upon these may be found not very inapplicable to many others. However that be, as I pledge myself to produce the strongest examples, that have come to my knowledge, if I am successful in shewing that these are no proofs of the

existence of a prophetic spirit, properly so called, in the persons to whom they are ascribed, I shall certainly have given a good degree of evidence, that the gift of prophecy is now totally withheld.

In the present attempt I am under no apprehensions of weakening the respect which is paid to the biblical prophecies. These will abide the severest scrutiny. If any of my readers have not perused Bishop Newton's *Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have been remarkably fulfilled*, I would earnestly recommend that work to their attention. They will find there, that those predictions stand on an immoveable basis, and that the argument deduced from them, in favour of the inspiration of the sacred penman, is strong indeed. The good man will rise from that work, with a firm assurance, that those things which he has learned from the scriptures are most certainly true, and a persuasion of this kind cannot fail of increasing his reliance upon the sacred promises, animating him to new diligence, and filling his mind with serenity and peace.

Since the sacred canon was completed, no person has given satisfactory evidence of his being a prophet. In investigating the nature of modern predictions, we discover, that some of them are inauthentic, and others so very obscure, that they will apply, with equal ease, to more than one event; that some are not supported by sufficient evidence, and that others were originally spoken only as guesses or

con-

conjectures. I will give an instance of each of these; and I am not afraid it will be said that I have selected weak examples, as I do not believe four others can be produced, which have been thought of equal force.

Though it may not be very easy to say what degree of evidence is necessary, in order to make us believe that a prophet is inspired, yet the author imagines that his readers, after perusing the following remarks, will conclude that the following persons at least have not the proper credentials.

MR. GEORGE WISHART.

The name and history of Mr. Wishart will be familiar to all, who have been conversant in books of Martyrology. Of course the remarkable prediction, attributed to him, will be known, as this is amongst the most curious parts of his history. I will, however, state the celebrated Buchanan's account of it, as he seems to have been the first who mentioned it; and it is sometimes differently related.

According to that historian, whilst Wishart was burning at the stake, the famous cardinal Beaton sat in a window, that was decorated in a most superb manner, feasting his eyes with the shocking sight. He also asserts that the martyr, when in the midst of the fire, said—"This flame occasions trouble to

my body indeed, but it hath in no wise broken my spirit. But he who so proudly looks down upon me from yonder lofty place, (pointing to the cardinal) shall ere long be as ignominiously thrown down, as now he proudly lolls at his ease.*"

Though the cardinal's looking out of the window, and Mr. Wishart's prophecy, are so confidently asserted, yet if we consider the silence of several contemporary writers, we shall think that little stress is to be laid upon the testimony of Buchanan. He might have heard them from others, but the following considerations seem sufficient to justify us in believing, that they are not matters of fact.

1. Sir David Lindsay, who lived at the time, and who wrote the tragedy of cardinal Beaton, in which he collects all that could be suggested to the cardinal's disadvantage, takes no notice of the prediction, nor of the circumstance of the window, on which it is founded. Had he known them, it does not seem probable that he would have omitted them, as he was a friend of Wishart's, and very inimical to the cardinal.

2. Fox, in his Martyrology, does not mention them. Yet he had the best information from Scotland that could be. As these particulars, therefore, are wanting in his work, this is a very strong evidence that they were not then spoken of in Scotland.

* Buchan. Rer. Scot. Hist. Lib. XV. page 294.

3. There

3. There is nothing said of them in the first edition of Knox's history, which, if not written by him, was at least compiled in a great measure from his papers. As he was an intimate acquaintance of Wishart, and staid a long time with the murderers in the castle, he could not but have known them, if true, and would not have omitted the publishing them, if he had known them.

4. The famous John Bale has given us an article of Cardinal Beaton*, in which the burning of Mr. Wishart, and the murder of the Cardinal, are both related, but there is not one word in it of Beaton's beholding the execution, or of the Martyr's prophecy. Yet he dedicated his fourteenth century of learned men to Alexander Ales and John Knox, of whose friendship to him, and literary communications, he makes honourable acknowledgments. This seems a very strong proof, that neither he nor they ever heard of this wonderful prophecy, and the manner in which it was so surprisingly fulfilled, since, if they had, those who are acquainted with their characters and writings, will scarcely believe that they would have been passed over in silence†.

* Scriptor. Britan. Cent. 14. N. 70.

† See Keith's History of the Church and State of Scotland, p. 42; Skinner's Ecclesiastical History of Scotland, vol. 2. Letter 31; and Article Beaton (David) in the second volume of Kippis's Biographia Britannica; from whence these reasons are taken.

This mass of evidence is sufficient to render the authenticity of the prediction very suspicious. It appears to have been a forgery; and the persons concerned in it have not contributed any thing to the honour of Mr. Wishart's memory. Many of those who have considered it as genuine, have supposed that Mr. Wishart was privy to the conspiracy, and that he might therefore foretel the end of the Cardinal without inspiration. Though a person should be cautious in casting such an imputation upon so good a man, yet it is highly gratifying to discover, that there is not the least ground for so foul an aspersion.

JOHN HUSS.

This famous man was burnt for his religion, about the beginning of the fifteenth century. A very remarkable medal was struck in honour of him, by his countrymen, the Bohemians, with this inscription, *Centum annis revolutis Deo respondebitis et mihi**. These words are said to have been spoken by him to his adversaries a little before his execution, and were afterwards considered as predictive of Luther, who entered upon the work of reformation about an hundred years after Huss's death†.

* That is, *When an hundred years are passed away you shall answer for this to God and to me.*

† See Huss's Life in Gilpin's Lives of Wickliff and his Disciples, p. 231.

I doubt

I doubt not but most of my readers will be before me in observing, how obscure the words of Hufs are when applied to that event. They certainly admit of a more obvious and natural sense. We may consider the Martyr as looking upon his persecutors, and making a reflection similar to that of Xerxes, when he beheld his vast army, and the thought passing through his mind, that in an hundred years every individual of it would be numbered with the dead. He carried however the idea farther than the heathen Prince, and reminded his adversaries, that they must render a solemn account of their conduct to the great God, when they would find that the act of violence done to him, was so far from being praise-worthy, as they supposed, that his blood would be required at their hands.

All this is easy and in character, but when we consider him as prophesying of Luther, we are at a loss to give any rational explanation of his words.

Prediction of the Death of the Duke of Buckingham.

The Duke of Buckingham was the favourite and Prime Minister of James the First. He fell by the hands of an assassin, whose name was Felton. There were said to be many prophecies of his violent death, but the following, which is related by the Earl of Clarendon, was thought the most deserving of credit.

“ There

" There was an officer in the King's wardrobe,
 " in Windsor Castle, of a good reputation for honesty
 " and discretion, and about the age of fifty years.
 " This man had, in his youth, been bred in a
 " school in the parish where Sir George Villiers,
 " the father of the Duke, lived; and had been much
 " cherished and obliged, in that season of his age,
 " by Sir George, whom afterwards he never saw.

" About ~~six~~ months before the miserable end of the
 " Duke of Buckingham, about midnight, this man,
 " being in his bed, and in very good health, there
 " appeared to him, on the side of his bed, a man
 " of a venerable aspect, who drew the curtains of
 " his bed, and fixing his eyes upon him, asked
 " him if he knew him? The poor man, having
 " called to his memory the presence of Sir George
 " Villiers, answered him, that he thought him to
 " be that person. He replied, he was in the right,
 " and that he expected a service from him, which
 " was, that he should go from him to his son the
 " Duke of Buckingham, and tell him, if he did
 " not somewhat to ingratiate himself to the people,
 " or, at least, to abate the extreme malice they
 " had against him, he would be suffered to live but
 " a short time. After this discourse he disappeared,
 " and the poor man, if he had been at all waking,
 " slept very well till morning, when he believed all
 " this to be a dream, and considered it no other-
 " wise.

" The

" The next night, or shortly after, the same
 " person appeared to him again, with an aspect a
 " little more severe than before; and asked him,
 " whether he had done as he required him? per-
 " ceiving he had not, he gave him very severe re-
 " prehensions; told him, he expected more com-
 " pliance from him, and that if he did not perform
 " his commands, he should enjoy no peace of
 " mind, but should be always pursued by him:
 " upon which he promised to obey him. But the
 " next morning, waking out of a good sleep,
 " though he was exceedingly perplexed with the
 " lively representation of all things to his memory,
 " he was willing still to persuade himself that he
 " had only dreamed; and considered that he was
 " a person at such a distance from the Duke, that
 " he knew not how to find any admission to his
 " presence; much less had any hope to be believed
 " in what he should say. So with great trouble
 " and inquietness he spent some time in thinking
 " what he should do, and in the end resolved to do
 " nothing in the matter.

" The same person appeared to him the third
 " time, with a terrible countenance, and bitterly
 " reproaching him for not performing what he had
 " promised to do. The poor man had by this time
 " the courage to tell him, that he had deferred the
 " execution of his commands, upon considering
 " how difficult it would be for him to get any ac-
 " cess

"cess to the Duke, having acquaintance with no
 "person about him; and if he could obtain ad-
 "mission to him, he should never be able to per-
 "suade him that he was sent in such a manner, but
 "should be thought to be mad, or to be set on by
 "his own, or the malice of other men, to abuse
 "the Duke, and so should be sure to be undone.
 "The person replied, that he should never find
 "rest, till he should perform what he required,
 "and therefore he were better to dispatch it; that
 "the access to his son was known to be very easy;
 "and for the gaining him credit, he would tell
 "him two or three particulars, which he charged
 "him never to mention to any person living, but
 "to the Duke himself; and he should no sooner
 "hear them, but he would believe all the rest he
 "should say; and so, repeating his threats, he left
 "him."*

Before we proceed to the sequel of the history, it
 may not be improper to offer a few remarks upon
 the part already quoted.

This story would have been much more striking,
 had the apparition come to the officer whilst he
 was awake. As it is, we can only say that he
 dreamed. The unpopularity of the Duke of Buc-
 kingham might have been floating in his mind
 through the day, and as dreams are made up of

* Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, Vol. I Part I. Book D

our waking thoughts; he might not have been able to disentangle himself from the subject ~~even in his~~ sleep. When he had once dreamed, a repetition, 7 would be far from being improbable, as the matter would have made a still deeper impression upon him.

It is also to be considered, that this was an age that was fond of the marvellous. For any thing we know, this person might be affected with the popular mania. We are, indeed, told, that at first he imagined he had only dreamed, but he might have some suspicion of the contrary, and when he betook himself to rest again, he might have an idea in his mind, that if what he had seen was of a supernatural nature, it would appear to him again. It is almost unnecessary for me to observe, how much any thing of this kind would contribute to a renewal of his dream.

It is also worthy of notice, that the prediction is not remarkable for its particularity. It says nothing either of the manner, or the precise time of his death. It only asserts that he should "live but a short time." And if we reflect upon the dangerous height of power to which he was raised, and the extreme malice which almost every where prevailed against him, we shall be inclined to think that any wise man might have ventured such a prediction, without much probability of being deceived.

But

But what has still greater weight with me is, that this miraculous story rests entirely upon the authority of a single witness. The prediction was not made public. We have no evidence of its having been delivered to the Duke himself. It owes all its credit to the supposed veracity of its author. This appears from Lord Clarendon's account, which being rather long, I will beg leave to abridge, promising to omit nothing which may be thought to countenance the authenticity of the story.

The poor man, we are told, fully confirmed by the last appearance, immediately set off for London, and prevailed upon Sir Ralph Freeman, to whom he was very well known, to procure him an interview with the Duke, alledging that he had something extraordinary to communicate. At their meeting, the Duke and the officer walked alone for near an hour. No person overheard their conversation. Sir Ralph, who was at some distance, observed, however, that the Duke appeared to be moved. And the officer, upon his return to Sir Ralph, told him, that when he mentioned those particulars, which were to gain him credit, but which he dared not impart to Sir Ralph, the Duke's colour changed, and he swore he could come to that knowledge only by the devil, for that those things were known only to himself and another person, who, he was sure, would never speak of them.—During the remainder of the morning

morning the Duke was observed to be pensive and thoughtful. And when he returned from hunting, which was sooner than usual, he spent two or three hours in close conference with his mother. Their conversation was loud and vehement, and not altogether void of passion, at least on his side; and when they parted, they were both observed to be affected with grief.*

Whether the noble writer merely related this miraculous tale in his capacity of historian, or whether he really thought it deserving of credit, it is not necessary to determine, but I am inclined to believe the former. Certain it is, that if we are ready to receive such reports, upon the testimony of a single witness, we shall open a wide door to imposture, and yet if we examine the whole of Lord Clarendon's narration, we shall find that there is nothing that can corroborate the assertions of the officer. It would have been some addition to the credibility of the prediction, if it had been mentioned to Sir Ralph Freeman, previous to the Duke's death. As the case stands at present, the evidence of that gentleman is of little consequence. Without knowing the nature of the officer's communication, he only observed that the Duke was moved by it. The only inference we can draw from this, as well from the Duke's subsequent be-

* See Clarendon's History, Vol. I. Part I. Book I.

haviour,

haviour, is, that what he had been told was of an important but unpleasant nature. The particular subject of their discourse is, in no respect, elucidated by either of these matters, and I can conceive it was of such a nature, that the officer might be desirous of keeping it secret, and that he might, after the death of the Duke, have invented this story, in order to stifle enquiry.

What the officer told Sir Ralph respecting his having mentioned to the Duke some particulars, which were to gain him credit, is not inconsistent with any thing I have advanced, as it tends only to shew, that he was in possession of *some* secrets, and indicates nothing respecting the nature of them.

I may safely therefore recur to my former assertion, that the whole of this miraculous story rests upon the unsupported testimony of the officer. We have no evidence that it was mentioned to the Duke. It received all its publicity after his death, and we have only a single witness to persuade us, that it was not contrived after that event had happened.

FLEMING.

After Louis the Sixteenth had been beheaded, and the government of France had assumed a republican form, a passage was found in the writings of

of the Reverend Robert Fleming, which was considered as a literary curiosity. Though it was written in the year seventeen hundred, yet it was thought to be remarkably descriptive of what had recently taken place in that country. As some of my readers may not have seen it, and as others may have laid an undue stress upon it, I shall quote it, for the sake of shewing that it does not at all go to prove, that its author possessed a prophetic spirit.

Mr. Fleming, having explained the three first vials, which are mentioned in the sixteenth chapter of the Revelation, in speaking upon that part of the fourth, which he considered as relating to future times, thus expresses himself:—"As to the remaining part of this vial, I do humbly suppose, that it will come to the highest pitch about the year 1717; and that it will run out about the year 1794. So that there is ground to hope, that about the year 1717, things may alter for the better. For I cannot but hope, that some new mortification of the chief supporters of Anti-christ will then happen. Perhaps the French monarchy may begin to be considerably humbled about that time; that whereas the present French King takes the sun for his emblem, and this for his motto, *nec pluribus impar*,* he may at length, or rather his successors, and the monarchy itself (at

* That is, Equal to several.

“least before the year 1794) be forced to acknowledge, that in respect to neighbouring potentates, “he is even *singulis impar*.”*

It will be observed by the reader, that Mr. Fleming offers this passage to the world only as a conjecture. He speaks with modesty and caution, and not with the confidence of a person pretending to prescience. If therefore we allow these words to be as remarkable as has been supposed, the only inference we can draw from them is, that he was fortunate in his guess, and not that he possessed the spirit of prophecy. Indeed had the author now been living, I am persuaded he would have been amongst the first to have withstood the bold pretensions of our modern prophets. For though he was so happy in his conjecture, that it will bear a comparison with any of the most boasted predictions, yet when he published it to the world, he prefaced it in the following modest manner.—

“And now, seeing I have marked out the time “we are in at present, it is time also to put a stop “to our apocalyptical thoughts, seeing *no man can “pretend, upon any just ground, to calculate future “times*. However, seeing I have come so far, I shall “adventure to present you further with some conjectural thoughts upon this head; for *I am far “from the presumption of some men to give them any “higher character*.”

* That is, unequal to any one.

Had Mr. Fleming been wrong in his conjecture, this would have reflected no discredit upon himself. He commented upon the scriptures with an humble diffidence, and imagined not that he possessed the spirit of infallibility. His example is a model to future commentators. If they follow it, when they happen to be successful, the public will give them credit for their sagacity, and when they mistake, will offer as an excuse for their errors the difficulty of the subject.

SECTION III.

The pernicious consequences of pretending to a prophetic Spirit.

AS I have, in the Introduction, given my opinion upon this subject, I shall now, without further preface, produce some of those historical examples, upon which that opinion is founded.

THOMAS GOODWIN.

“ Tillotson told me,” says Bishop Burnet, “ that
 “ a week after Cromwell’s death, being by accident
 “ at Whitehall, and hearing there was to be a fast
 “ that day in the household, he, out of curiosity,

“ went into the presence-chamber where it was
 “ held. There he heard a great deal of strange
 “ stuff, enough to disgust a man for ever of that
 “ enthusiastic boldness. God was, as it were, re-
 “ proached with Cromwell’s services, and chal-
 “ lenged for taking him away so soon. Goodwin,
 “ who had pretended to assure them in a prayer
 “ that he was not to die, which was but a very few
 “ minutes before he expired, had now the impu-
 “ dence to say to God, *Thou hast deceived us; and*
 “ *we were deceived.*”*

It would have become this pretended prophet to have acknowledged his fault in meddling with matters which were too high for him. The prediction had arisen out of his own fanatical brain, as is manifest from the failure of its accomplishment, and yet his understanding is so far perverted, that he wickedly persists in declaring, that he received it from God. He even dares to tell the Lord God himself, that he had proved a deceiver, in raising expectations which he had not thought proper to gratify. What is this but blasphemy? And what else can we expect from such persons? It is in vain that we look for a scriptural and well-regulated piety from them, for it is not to be found. They are the dupes of enthusiasm and folly, and their conduct is suited to their principles.

* Bishop Burnet’s History of his own Time, Book I. Vol. I. p. 116, 117.

GEORGE BELL.

About the year 1760, much enthusiasm prevailed amongst Mr. Wesley's people in London. Dreams, visions, and revelations were honoured more than the sacred scriptures. These evils were encouraged by one of the most popular preachers, whose name was Maxfield. For a considerable time Mr. Wesley was at a loss how to act. He saw that much good was done, but he saw also that much evil was intermixed. Mr. Maxfield and his companions appeared to be very useful amongst the people, but they encouraged those things, which are subversive of the order, and contrary to scripture. At length, Mr. Wesley resolved to oppose their fanatical proceedings, and the resolution did him honour. It would be well if those who have succeeded him, would imitate him in this respect, as some religious extravagances have appeared amongst the methodists since his death, which are far from being a credit to that society.

One of the warmest supporters of the enthusiasm which so much prevailed, was George Bell, a Serjeant in the Life-Guards, of whom the following account is given in one of the lives of Mr. Wesley.—“ He was at one time unquestionably a man of piety, of deep communion with God, and of extraordinary zeal for the conversion of souls.

But he was not a man of understanding: his imagination was lively, but his judgment weak. While therefore he hearkened unto the advice of those, who had longer experience in the ways of God than himself, as well as more knowledge of the devices of Satan, he was a pattern to all, and eminently useful to his brethren. But not continuing to regard either them or his bible, he fell into enthusiasm, pride, and great uncharitableness; and as he took every wrong impression made upon his mind, as a revelation from God, he at last prophesied, in January 1763, that *the end of the world would be on the 28th of February following*. Mr. Wesley explicitly declared against this prediction, first in the society, then in preaching, and afterwards in the public papers. But notwithstanding all he could say, when the day arrived, many were afraid to go to bed at night, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded, that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake."

Now mark the sequel.—"Poor George Bell," continue the Biographers, "is still alive*"; but he "makes no pretensions to religion. He has been "for many years a deplorable instance of the danger "which arises even to truly pious persons, from "giving place to any impression, that does not

* Their Work was published in 1792.

"agree with the only true standard, the word of
" God.*"

VENNER, *and the Fifth-Monarchy-Men.*

"We all know," says Mr. Halhed, "that when
"men are once steadily persuaded of the authen-
"ticity of a prophecy, they are almost involunta-
"rily led to perform their part towards its comple-
"tion†." I readily subscribe to the truth of his re-
mark, and as he has given no instances to corrobo-
rate it, I beg leave to furnish him with the two fol-
lowing, which I consider as cases in point.

In the beginning of the reign of King Charles
the Second, "one Venner, a violent Fifth-Monar-
"chy-man, thought it was not enough to believe
"that Christ was to reign on earth, and to put the
"Saints in possession of the kingdom, but added
"to this, that the Saints were to take the kingdom
"themselves. He gathered some of the most
"furious of the party to a meeting in Coleman-
"street. There they concerted the day, and the
"manner of their rising to set Christ on his throne,
"as they called it. But withal they meant to ma-
"nage the government in his name; and were so
"formal, that they had prepared standards and co-

* Life of the Rev. John Wesley by Dr. Coke and Mr. Moore.
Book 2. Chap. 4.

† Halhed's Testimony in favour of Brothers, page 5th.

“lours with their devices on them, and furnished themselves with very good arms. But when the day came, there was but a small appearance, not exceeding twenty. However, they resolved to venture out into the streets, and cry out, *No king but Christ*. Some of them seemed persuaded, that Christ would come down, and head them. They scoured the streets before them, and made great progress. Some were afraid, and all were amazed at this piece of extravagance. They killed a great many, but were at last mastered by numbers; and were all either killed, or taken, or executed.”*

This is a striking exemplification of Mr. Halhed's observation, and the following will be found no less so.

The Anabaptists in the Sixteenth Century.

In this century, vast numbers of Anabaptists acted in a manner that was discreditable to religion, and highly prejudicial to the interests of society. When they were informed that Luther, seconded by several persons of eminent piety, had successfully attempted the reformation of the Church, they imagined that the time was now come, in which God himself was to dwell with his servants in

* Burnet's History of his own Time, Book I. Vol. I. p. 232, 233.

an extraordinary manner by celestial succours, and to establish upon earth a kingdom truly spiritual and divine. " Nothing was more clear unto their " seeming," says the great Hooker, " than that " a New Jerusalem being spoken of in scripture, " they undoubtedly were themselves that New Je- " rusalem, and the old did by way of a certain figu- " rative resemblance signify what they should both " be and do. Here they drew in a sea of matter, " by applying all things unto their own company, " which are any where spoken concerning divine " favours and benefits bestowed upon the old " commonwealth of Israel; concluding that as " Israel was delivered out of Egypt, so they spi- " ritually out of the Egypt of this world's servile " thralldom unto sin and superstition; as Israel was " to root out the idolatrous nations, and to plant " instead of them a people which feared God, so " the same Lord's good-will and pleasure was now " that these new Israelites should under the conduct " of other Joshua's, Sampson's, and Gideon's, per- " form a work no less miraculous, in casting out " violently the wicked from the earth, and estab- " lishing the kingdom of Christ with perfect li- " berty."*

Their progress was rapid; for in a very short space of time, their discourses, visions, and pre- dictions, excited commotions in a great part of

* Preface to Ecclesiastical Polity.

Europe, and drew into their communion a prodigious multitude, whose ignorance rendered them easy victims to the illusions of enthusiasm.

Very many of those, who considered themselves as the founders of the new and perfect church about to be established, imagined that they were under the direction of a divine impulse, and were armed against all opposition by the power of working miracles. "It was this detestable faction, that
 "in the year 1521 began their fanatical work, and
 "excited the most unhappy tumults and commo-
 "tions in Saxony and the adjacent countries. They
 "employed at first the various arts of persuasion to
 "propagate their doctrine. But when they saw
 "that these methods of making proselytes were not
 "attended with such a rapid success as they fondly
 "expected, and that the ministry of Luther and
 "other eminent reformers was detrimental to their
 "cause, they then had recourse to more expedi-
 "tious measures, and madly attempted to propa-
 "gate their fanatical doctrine by force of arms.
 "They assembled in the year 1525 a numerous
 "army, composed, for the most part, of the peasants
 "of Suabia, Thuringia, Franconia, and Saxony,
 "and declared war against all laws, government, and
 "magistrates of every kind, under the chimerical
 "pretext that Christ was now to take the reins of
 "civil and ecclesiastical government into his own
 "hands, and to rule alone over the nations. But
 "this

" this seditious crowd was routed and dispersed,
 " without much difficulty, by the Elector of Saxony
 " and other princes; Munzer, their ringleader,
 " ignominiously put to death, and his factious
 " counsellors scattered abroad in different places.

" This bloody defeat of one part of these seditious
 " and turbulent fanatics, did not produce that
 " effect upon the rest that might naturally have
 " been expected. Even after this period, numbers
 " of them wandered about in Germany, Switzer-
 " land, and Holland, and excited the people to re-
 " bellion by their seditious discourses. They ga-
 " thered together congregations in several places,
 " foretold the approaching abolition of magistracy,
 " and the downfall of civil rulers and governors;
 " and, while they pretended to be ambassadors of
 " the Most High, insulted, on many occasions, the
 " majesty of Heaven by the most flagitious crimes.

" There stands upon record a most shocking
 " instance of this, in the dreadful commotions
 " that were excited at Munster in the year 1533,
 " by certain Dutch Anabaptists, that chose that city
 " as the scene of their horrid operations, and com-
 " mitted in it such deeds, as would surpass all cre-
 " dibility, were they not attested in a manner that
 " excludes every degree of doubt and uncertainty.

" A handful of madmen, who had got into their
 " heads the visionary notion of a new and spiritual
 " kingdom, soon to be established in an extraor-
 " dinary

" dinary manner, formed themselves into a society,
 " under the guidance of a few illiterate leaders,
 " chosen out of the populace ; and they persuaded
 " not only the ignorant multitude, but even several
 " among the learned, that Munster was to be the
 " seat of this New and Heavenly Jerusalem, whose
 " ghostly dominion was to be propagated from
 " thence to all the ends of the earth. The ring-
 " leaders of this furious tribe were John Bockhold,
 " a taylor of Leyden, one Gerhard, with some
 " others, whom the blind rage of enthusiasm, or the
 " still more culpable principles of sedition, had
 " embarked in this extravagant and desperate cause.
 " They made themselves masters of the city of
 " Munster, deposed the magistrates, and committed
 " all the enormous crimes and ridiculous follies,
 " which the most perverse and infernal imagina-
 " tion could suggest. John Bockhold was pro-
 " claimed king and legislator of this new Hierar-
 " chy ; but his reign was transitory, and his end
 " deplorable. For the city of Munster was, in the
 " year 1536, retaken, the New Jerusalem of the
 " Anabaptists destroyed, and its mock monarch
 " punished with a most painful and ignominious
 " death."*

After reading these accounts respecting the Fifth-
 monarchy-men and the Anabaptists, who can sup-

* Mosheim's Eccl. Hist. Vol. 2. Cent. 16. Sect. 3. Part 2.
 of the Quarto Edition.

pose that pretensions, like those of Brothers, may not have pernicious consequences? I flatter myself with the idea, that his disciples will never become numerous. Were a very considerable number to be persuaded of the truth of his prophecies, I should expect that they would have recourse to arms to hasten their fulfilment. They would be for setting the prince of the Hebrews upon his throne, and though the efforts of such fanatics would not be likely to be crowned with the success they might wish for, yet they would be possessed with such a confident assurance of success, that the attempt could not fail of proving fatal to themselves and a multitude of others.

This argument from history is now considered as complete. I have preferred this indirect mode of attack, from a supposition that it might have the greater weight. Indeed I have been so disgusted with many parts of the writings of Brothers and his coadjutors, that I should think it an affront to common sense to take up my pen, in order to refute such gross and impious absurdities.

F I N I S.

below

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